

The Value of Tertiary Sport to the Sport Sector

We know the value of competitive sport for 18-25-year-olds

Sport has a positive impact on the wellbeing of students through the physical, social and mental benefits associated with being involved in organised sport and competition.

An increasing body of international evidence suggests that increased participation in sport and physical activity can also lead to improved academic and social outcomes, benefiting students, schools and communities. In the sport sector, these broad benefits are acknowledged in the drive to grow young people's and community sport. Community sport is also a feeder into high performance sport and the 18-25 age group is a pivotal one for achieving competitive, high performance outcomes.

The tertiary sector is a diverse and significant market for sport.

It is a network of 8 Universities, 18 technical Institutes and 3 Waananga. Over 100,000 full-time students in eight universities, plus an additional 61,000 studying in Technical Institutes. In total, over 420,000 students enrolled in formal study programmes in 2015, including 61,400 international students.

What does the tertiary sector have to do with this?

What does a competitive inter-tertiary sport structure specifically contribute to the sport system and student athletes? Below we summarise some of the key benefits to having a quality tertiary sport structure in place. Before we summarise those benefits, it is important to be clear about the limitations of the evidence base.

- There are strong theoretical grounds for assuming that sport can contribute to a range of outcomes in tertiary education and that sport in turn will benefit from tertiary age participation. A number of associations have been made between tertiary sport and a host of positive outcomes for both athletes and sport. However, the evidence base, with robust empirical data, is still in its infancy.
- The lack of evidence, however, does not mean that such positive associations do not occur; but it does make it difficult for organisations and institutions to develop clear strategies for future work in the tertiary education sector, and justify resourcing them. We need to ensure that when we develop programmes and implement sport offerings, we consider how to include evaluation, monitoring and research to grow that evidence base.

Growing the Evidence Base

At the back of this document we list some studies of interest, including some information from evaluations and case studies regarding how to provide a quality sport offering.

One of the future aims of UTSNZ is to encourage more NZ specific research into the value of competitive sport in tertiary settings. UTSNZ looks forward to working with tertiary institutions and national sport organisations to further build the evidence around the value of sport. If you want to discuss research, or find more information, don't hesitate to contact us.



What can competitive sport in the tertiary sector contribute to wider sport sector?

Below is a summary of the known positive associations between competitive sport and the tertiary sector.

- **Grow the Participation Base.** Tertiary institutions have a captive audience in comparison to other post-secondary school environments. This audience is therefore easier to market to. Also, students are more likely to try something new and take up new learning opportunities, including sports. Many TEIs already recognise the value of competitive sport and are aligning and increasing resource into sporting infrastructure and opportunities.
- **Address the secondary-tertiary drop-off** – The drop of participation in community sport, both social and formal, in the ages 18-25 has been a cause for concern for some years. The tertiary environment provides an institutional framework for the continuance of secondary sport involvement, with options for social and/or higher performance development. In particular, a quality inter-tertiary sport structure offers a bridge to overcome the gap that occurs in the post-secondary school transition that vital to maintain participation and competition pathways.
- **Impact Talent Development** - Universities and tertiary institutions can help grow the elite athlete talent pool. They offer a setting and expertise to better prepare athletes for high performance through quality sporting experiences in the 'development phase' of talent development. A strong competition structure in the tertiary sector is essential to this. In addition, international affiliations aligned to that competition structure provide opportunities to participate at international events e.g. the World University Summer Games. Held every two years, this event mirrors an Olympic Games in terms of athlete participation levels and organisational infrastructure. This offers an ideal opportunity to blood elite athletes and administrators for future Commonwealth and Olympic Games. Tertiary institutions also support the sporting system through targeted research and provision of education and training opportunities in athlete and talent and development. They lead best practice in athlete development through education and the curriculum delivered to students (workforce of the future).
- **Growing Research and Innovation** – Tertiary institutions can contribute significantly to sport research. Virtually all sports research and development is associated in some way with tertiary institutions. Tertiary institutions also provide opportunity for data collection and analysis through their student ID systems. This makes them well placed to collate and provide valuable insight into the 18-24 year old student market. The establishment of tertiary sport programmes, structures and offerings within, and between, tertiary institutions are crucial to drive and feed such research.
- **Building Sport Sector Capacity and Capability** - The tertiary sport sector delivers most of the teaching and training for the skills and disciplines required for sport and recreation leadership, management, operations, officiating, research, innovation and development. Tertiary institutions also have good infrastructure and cultures to support volunteer development. Again, the more tertiary sport programmes, structures and offerings within, and between, tertiary institutions, the more we offer opportunity to train and build the sport workforce.
- **Improve Athlete Welfare** – Building tertiary sport and tertiary sport partnerships can build important relationships between high performance programmes and tertiary institutions - vital to ensuring athlete well-being and achievement. Many high-performance athletes are also students and partnerships between their TEIs and NSOs can help ensure both sporting and academic aspirations are realised. For example, the



2016 NZ Olympic Team (Rio) was 40% composed of Massey university student-athletes alone, many who received campus based support through the AFTN programme.

- **Retaining Athletes** - Where there is an absence of quality sport opportunities in NZ, many tertiary students are attracted to academic/competition programmes offered overseas and may not return to participate as elite athletes or in the workforce as skilled professionals. Provision of quality tertiary sporting opportunities may assist in preventing this migration.
- **Providing Strategic Facilities** - Many larger tertiary institutions are effectively sports hubs - usually not just with single facilities but facility clusters along with support administrative and technical services and resourcing. Some single facilities are highly strategic and usually provided to a high standard with good capacity. Together all facilities associated with Tertiary Institutions represent a large component of regional sports facilities nationwide. In recent times, some institutions are specialising their facilities to contribute to or complement nearby centres of excellence.
- **Strategic resourcing and investment** - Tertiary Institutions are large businesses and have high capacity for significantly investing in particular strategic partnerships, facility provision, events, programmes and athletes. They can do this individually or in collaborative partnerships of significant scale. Examples include the AUT-Millennium Institute partnership; the connections between Waikato University and the Avantidrome; the hosting of the Cricket Academy at Lincoln University; sponsorship of the Highlanders by Otago University along with its complementary involvements with Forsyth-Barr Stadium.

You may be interested in the following reports and articles:

- Sport England, 'Active Universities evaluation report Year Three Summer 2014', 2014. This report outlines findings from a three-year project to increase sport in a select number of universities in the United Kingdom.
- Sport Industry Research Centre, Sheffield Hallam University 'The Impact of Engagement in Sport on Graduate Employability' 2013
- E City University project, in partnership with the University's Careers Department, also publicised the findings of the BUCS employability study 2013, 'The impact of engagement in sport on graduate employability,' which demonstrated advantages associated with sports participation. <http://bucs.org.uk/page.asp?section=17397§ionTitle=Research>
- Australian Government 2008, "Review of Australian Higher Education – Final Report", Bradley, D (Chair), Noonan, P, Nugent, H, & Scales, B, Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia Publications. A major aim of the 'Bradley Review' was to identify the factors that would enable the Australian tertiary education system to increase and sustain its international competitiveness in the future.
- Final report to Scottish Student Sport and Sport Scotland from the Brunel Centre for Sport, Health and Wellbeing: "Evidence Review: Understanding the value of sport and physical activity in tertiary education". Dr Louise Mansfield Professor Tess Kay Brunel Centre for Sport, Health and Well Being (BC SHaw) Dr. Catherine Meads Health Economics Research Group (HERG), with Dr. Iain Lindsay Brunel Centre for Sport, Health and Wellbeing (BC•SHaW). BC•SHaW, Brunel University, July 2013

